to (c) Export target for 1988-89 has been fixed at Rs. 18795 crores as compared to provisional export figures of Rs. 15719 crores during 1987-88. As a part of the strategy for increasing exports and exceed the target fixed for 1988-89 Government have initiated dialogue with Export Promotion Councils, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry large industrial houses and other export promotion agencies. During these meetings these organisations were exhorted to take all steps to achieve higher level of exports. The participants in these meetings have assured the government that they would strive to achieve a higher growth rate.

(d) The Government has implemented a number of measures to facilitate increased capacity for export production to upgrade technology to make the export sector being more competitive through improved access to capital goods and raw materials at near international prices and providing fiscal and monetary incentives for increasing exports.

Erosion of the Bhagirathi River Bank in Uluberia (West Bengal)

1024. SHRI SUKOMAL SEN:

SHRIMATI KANAK MUKHERJEE:

Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the serious situation of Uluberia in West Bengal due to erosion of the bank of river Bhagirathi;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof;

(c) whether any action has been taken to save Uluberia; and

(d) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRIMATI KRISHNA SAHI): (a) to (d) The Government of West Bengal has taken urgent palliative measures at an estimated cost of Rs. 10 lakhs to restore the damage caused due to subsidence to the embankment.

Embracing of Sikh Religion by Harijans in Meerut

1025. DR. NARREDDY THULASI REDDY: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that about 350 Harijan families have embraced Sikh religion in Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh recently;

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard; and

(c) what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes, Sir. As per State Government's report 332 Harijans have embraced Sikh religion in Meerut District during the period November, 1988 to January, 1989.

(b) The Harijans of the Nagla Hereru area, who had been unhappy with the lack of support from caste Hindus in their disputes with the Muslims, especially from July, 1988, after the Gram Pradhan elections preferred to embrace Sikhism as a solution to their problems.

(c) It being public law and order problem the State Government is of the view that voluntary conversion is not objectionable unless use of force, inducement, or fraudulent means are established, for which provisions exists under IPC 352, 506 and 508. The

State Government of Uttar Pradesh is seized of the problem.

Effect of smuggling of sophisticated weapons into the country on law and order situation

1026. PROF. C. LAKSHMANNA: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that of late the law and order situation in the country in different States has been adversely affected due to smuggling in of AK-47 Rifles, etc. which are being frequently used by the terrorist and extremist groups;

(b) if so, what efforts are being made to prevent the smuggling of such lethal weapons into the country;

(c) what is the *modus operandi* of smuggling of these items into the country; and

(d) what strategy has been adopted to check; smuggling of such sophisticated weapons?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (d) Government have no information that the law and order situation is adversely affected due to smuggling of AK-47 Rifles etc. in the country as a whole. Most of the reports concerning use of AK-47 Rifles are emanating from Punjab. The BSF who are guarding Indo-Pakistan and Indo-Bangladesh borders are fully on vigil against attempts to smuggle such weapons into the country. Steps have been taken to strengthen the BSF as well as other infrastructure for preventing infilteration, smuggling etc. through the border.

Irrigation Projects on Orissa and Andhra Pradesh Border

1027. SHRI SUBAS MOHANTY: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) what are the names of the medium and major irrigation projects on Orissa and Andhra Pradesh border;

(b) whether his Ministry is aware of the lack of cooperation between the Andhra Pradesh and Orissa Governments in bearing the maintenance cost of these projects; and

(c) whether any guidelines/directives have been issued or are proposed to be issued by the Central Government to the Andhra Pradesh to help the Orissa Government in meeting the cost of maintenance of such projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRIMATI KRISHNA SAHI): (a) to (c) No major or medium project has been completed on the Orissa-Andhra Pradesh border. As such sharing of maintenance cost of such project does not arise.

Sale of surplus land by NTC Mills for Modernisation purposes

1028. SHRI CHITTA BASU: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have permitted the NTC mills to sell their surplus land for raising funds for the modernisation of its mills; and

(b) what are the details of such permission already given or being contemplated, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI RAFIQUE ALAM): (a) and (b) Government have permitted NTC mills located all over the country to